

## **I AM the Gate (John 10:9)**

**Reading:** John 10:1-10

**Review:** A few weeks ago, we began a study on the self descriptions of Jesus found in John known as the “I am” discourses.

7 statements made by Jesus to help us to realize that He was the great “I am” of the OT.

The word ‘AM’ is the present singular of ‘BE’.

It means something that is happening at this present moment.

Jesus is saying here, "I am".

Not will be, not maybe, not might be, but I am.

Here in our text in John 10 Jesus makes two audacious claims about himself.

V7 I am the gate for the sheep

V9 I am the gate.

We are surrounded by gates.

We arrive at and depart from airports through gates.

In order to get to those gates we pass through a security gate.

When you catch a train you have to go through electronic ticket gates.

Many of us have security gates on the entrances to our homes...to keep people out.

For those who are science fiction fans, there are even Stargates that provide access to distant galaxies.

Here Jesus is in conversation with his disciples and the Jewish religious authorities,

And he identifies himself as “the gate.”

But notice: he does not say that he is *a* gate but that he is *the* gate.

If you are to get to God, you must deal with Jesus.

Access to God comes no other way.

Jesus is opening up a new understanding of who he is through these verses...

So our faith and trust in him is deepened.

In these 10 verses Jesus is basically saying three things:

1. I am the gate for the **Shepherds** (V1-5)
2. I am the gate for the **Sheep** (6-9)
3. I want to give you the best possible life (10)

## **1. I am the gate for the *Shepherds* (V1-5)**

This gate teaching of Jesus is one of his most misunderstood teachings because people often miss the context.

I admit that I had to think long and hard about understanding the passage in context.

In chapter 9, Jesus had just healed a blind man who was taken to the Pharisees, but rather than rejoicing with the man, the Pharisees condemned and excommunicated him for being born blind claiming his sin was responsible for his condition.

So Jesus is telling a story (giving a sermon) in direct opposition to the Pharisees because of their handling of this man.

And he opened his sermon with a familiar illustration (shepherds and sheep) knowing that every one there would have some understanding.

In Jesus' day, sheep were kept two ways.

*The first way was in cities and villages.* Usually there was a large holding corral where shepherds would bring their flocks to secure them at night – it was a public pen able to hold several flocks under the care of a watchman whose duty was to guard the gate during the night and to admit the shepherds in the morning. The shepherds would walk into the pen, call their sheep and the sheep would respond to the voice of their shepherd who would lead them out to pasture.

*The second way was how a shepherd would tend his sheep in the country.* A shepherd would herd his sheep into a low walled enclosure of piled rocks with a small opening. At night, since there was no gate, just an opening, the shepherd would lie across the opening to keep the sheep in and the wild animals out – he would literally become the door.

I believe Jesus refers to both of these in this text for two distinct reasons.

First, Jesus was trying to expose the false teaching of the Pharisees while secondly, introducing Himself as the truth of God.

In verses 1-5 Jesus is trying to help the people understand that the Pharisees weren't really their shepherds but false teachers and only people who care for them like He does are actually their spiritual shepherds.

In the opening verses we hear how access to the sheep could only be granted by one of two ways.

Either you had to enter by the way of the watchman or you had to sneak in over the wall.

Jesus made a very clear indictment concerning the teachers of the law and Pharisees who regarded themselves as shepherds of the people.

He was saying, true shepherds come by the way of the watchman (God) to care for you... but the Pharisees are thieves who are trying to lead you astray.

Notice that Jesus calls them both thieves and robbers.

The thief is the one who steals by stealth...hiding it under his coat.

The robber is the one who takes with violence...stealing at gun point.

The association that Jesus is making with the leaders of Israel is that, as false teachers, they sometimes use cunning deception to lead others astray or they will use force and manipulation to get their way.

I think it is important to understand the message here...

there are many false teachers about us knowingly and unknowingly leading people astray

In fact, I dare say that the vast majority of the Pharisees thought that they were doing the right thing – yet they were dead wrong.

They had religion without relationship – and Christianity is religion with relationship.

It is not a coincidence that Jesus refers to us as sheep – were dumb.

We'll follow someone because they tickle our ears or rub our tummies not realizing that they are leading us astray.

Just need to look at the cults that abound today.

I find this hard to say but...

I think we can put Catch the Fire Ministries in that cult category as he raises the visions he has above Scripture, and that is deeply disturbing.

It is imperative we learn how to identify a shepherd from God, as opposed to a false shepherd.

People who deserve to be listened to will always come to you from a Jesus perspective.

They are the ones who speak the things of God.

Their desire is to win people to faith, grow them in the faith, and see them share the faith.

False teachers have their own agenda and have little if any interest in God's agenda.

False teachers are anyone who gives instruction for living that is contrary to the Word and will of God.

If someone is telling you something that doesn't seem right...  
If the truth gets watered down...  
Give it the scriptural Jesus test.

The warning Jesus gave to the people and to us today is simple...  
Run from false shepherds!

So firstly Jesus says he is the gate for the *Shepherds* (V1-5)  
**Now he is saying...I am the gate for the *Sheep* (6-9)**

In verses 6-9 Jesus makes a transition from the sheep held in the communal pens of the city to the shepherd who is tending his sheep in the country.

Remember, the sheepfold in the country was a smaller low-walled corral with a single narrow entrance.

Here is where it gets interesting.  
The corral had a narrow opening, but there was not gate.  
The shepherd slept in the entrance becoming the door.

Sir George Adam Smith was a well known OT scholar who once related a story of an incident that happened to him as he travelled through the Middle East.

As he travelled he came across a shepherd with his sheep.  
After talking with the shepherd for a while the man showed him to the place where he kept his sheep at night.  
A place with 4 low walls and a narrow opening.

Smith asked, "This is where they go at night?"  
The shepherd replied, "Yes, and when they are in there they are perfectly safe."  
Smith replied, "But there is no door."  
The shepherd responded, "I am the door."

Of course, the shepherd was not a Christian;  
he was simply speaking from an Arab shepherd's point of view.

Smith asked, "What do you mean you are the door?"  
The shepherd replied, "When the light has gone, and all the sheep are inside, I lie in the open space, and no sheep ever goes out but across my body, and no wolf comes in unless he crosses my body; I am the door."

This is exactly what Jesus is saying to us here in this text.

I am the door!

To go into the fold, you must go through me.

To go out to pasture, you must go through me.

As the door, Jesus is the protector and provider of the sheep.

So, when you come in the door, you are not only saved, but you are safe and secure.

When you go out to pasture, you are nurtured and satisfied.

Verse: 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they might have life and have it to the full.

Jesus is the Gate of SALVATION

Jesus is the one and only gate – the sole way to God.

Salvation comes through him.

This is a fundamental truth of Christianity ...if there is no Jesus...

then there is no way to God,...no truth about God...and no life with God.

Jesus made an exclusive claim – I am God.

I am the only way to God.

No other way...not by good works; not by Mohammad; nor the Hindu faith.

No other way.

No other religions leaders have ever made such a bold claim and were able to back it up.

Why?

Because they were men – but Jesus was God in the flesh.

How is Jesus the gate?

Though he was sinless...he became sin for us.

On the cross he shouldered the curse, anger of God for my sin

He took the judgement of God for me.

He paid for my sin.

Through his resurrection he overcame death!

We share in that resurrected life.

He has opened the way for us into heaven.

This may be an exclusive claim by Jesus...but it is also an inclusive invitation

If *anyone* enters – salvation is available to *anyone* who will believe.

It's not based upon effort, ability, looks, or deeds – it is based solely upon the work of God.

This is why it must be exclusive – because only Christ died.

But it is inclusive, because Jesus died for all who would believe.

Do you believe?

Salvation is available to everyone, but it's not automatic.

You must believe and receive when the Spirit of God calls and convicts.

So Jesus is the gate for us sheep...

**The gate that leads to the best possible life...**

A life of security, satisfaction and abundance.

This is a two-fold security –

first there is the security of my eternal life – salvation (John 10:28)

and there is the security of earthly life.

God wants me to know that no matter how great the trial or temptation, that I am safe in His care.

He tells me to trust Him, cast my cares upon Him, consider all things joy in Him, and believe that He will supply all my needs according to His riches in glory.

God wants me to know that I am His child and that I am in His care.

In times of turmoil and crisis like the past 2 weeks here in Victoria...

God wants his sheep to know that they are secure.

You and I, as followers of Jesus are secure.

Jesus came to give us purpose on this earth.

He came to lead us that we might have value in this life for His kingdom and His glory.

He wants you to have joy, happiness, and fulfilment – but he wants the source to be Himself.

As believers, we will never find fulfilment in the things of this world because God jealously wants us to find our satisfaction in Him alone.

Jesus tells his listeners that those who enter through the gate will be able to go in and out and find pasture.

Pastures are places of nourishment that also provide protection.

It is tempting for us to equate the full life with the cheap imitations of the world.

Television commercials claim that the full, abundant life goes along with drinking beer, wearing a certain kind of sport shoe, or driving a certain type of car.

You can't find abundant living in a can or in a bottle or a pair of tennis shoes or a car.  
You can't find abundant life in a capsule or a pill or in cocaine or marijuana or any kind of drug.

John 10:10 says that abundant living is only found in Jesus.

The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy.

Through the devil's empty pictures of fame, money, and drugs, he steals from, kills, and destroys people.

But God's idea is different.

Jesus says I have come that they might have life, and they might have it to the full (abundantly)

The abundant life that is ours through Christ does not necessarily involve comfort, wealth, or an abundance of worldly things.

When Jesus talks about abundance, he is referring to the things of God...

relationship, presence, power, steadfast love, and abundant forgiveness.

Abundant living means living your life according to God's Word.

You can't follow God unless you are going his way.

Have you ever tried to follow someone who was going the opposite way of where you were going?

It isn't possible.

You must be going in the same direction in order to follow someone.

When you are going in the same direction, you are involved in the same things, and you see things in the same way.

We have access to an abundant life through the gate, Jesus Christ.

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus Christ is not an exclusive gate. The family of God is not like a tree house with a trap door designed to keep people out and that is accessible only with a password.

Jesus is a gate of invitation to enter and experience a relationship with God and an abundant life.

If Jesus is the gate, we need to be in step with him...

So we can know his voice, follow him, and experience life, more and better than we ever dreamed of.